

Easter 5 April 24, 2016

John 21:1-19

“Are You Free for Breakfast?”

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*“When you wake up in the morning, Pooh,” said Piglet, “what’s the FIRST thing you say to yourself?”*

*“What’s for breakfast?” said Pooh. “What do YOU say, Piglet?”*

*“I say, I wonder what’s going to happen EXCITING today?” said Piglet.*

*Pooh nodded thoughtfully. “It’s the same thing,” he said.*

“Breakfast is ready” might be the Beal family’s favorite three words.

My husband Tim is renowned for his raspberry coffee cake and brunch feasts. When he says, “Breakfast is ready,” our sleepest family members move quickly.

We’ve been accused of being the most breakfast-y people our friends know. In fact, we have breakfast for dinner so often we call it “brinner.” My favorite breakfast place in Denver is the Denver Biscuit Co. (Is it ok to give it a plug?) And, we got a great vintage waffle iron at the Montview garage sale this weekend! It’s missing its cord, but Tim has already found one.

So, of course, that one of Jesus’ first appearances to the disciples after his resurrection was cooking breakfast over a charcoal fire on the shore of the Sea of Galilee warms my heart, as it would have Winnie the Pooh’s.

There’s something about a warm breakfast that demonstrates hospitality in a simple yet soul-nourishing way. I like to think that agape ( or love) feasts in the early Christian communities were breakfasts shared around early morning tables. Certainly we can all get behind the truth that Biscuits and honey INCARNATE comfort and love.

In our story, The disciples had left Jerusalem and returned home to Galilee, about 70 miles north of the last time they saw Jesus after his resurrection. Peter announced, “I’m going fishing.” There weren’t many things Peter could control at that point, so he returned to what he knew best. When we are disoriented, we can find ourselves returning to what is most familiar.

The disciples had been fishing all night. Then, at daybreak, they saw a figure on the shore, and slowly recognized that the stranger was Jesus.

The last time Peter was around a fire was in Jerusalem, on the night Jesus was arrested. Three times that night, Peter denied he ever knew Jesus. Peter left THAT fire weeping bitterly over the shame of his betrayal of his friend and teacher.

Peter’s response to seeing Jesus this time on the shore was open-hearted vulnerability. Peter was filled with a kind of loving Madness so much so that like

dropping a heavy net of shame, Peter bounded out of the boat barely clothed and with reckless abandon raced toward forgiveness. Jesus welcomed him with a resurrection breakfast.

Some of the very best stories we have of Jesus in the New Testament are stories that include loveable, impulsive and, at times, “dense as a rock,” Peter. He is the most visible disciple in the four gospels.

Listen to a few scenes from Peter’s life:

Jesus met Peter, then known as Simon, by the seaside and called him to follow. Following his heart, Peter dropped his net and followed Jesus.

Later Jesus renamed Simon, Peter, which means “rock.”

When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water at night, he leapt out of his boat to meet Jesus in the distant fog. And then, upon realizing he too was on water, he immediately sank into the waves in a panic.

When Peter saw Jesus with Elijah and Moses at the Transfiguration, in his enthusiasm he offered to help build three tabernacles on the mountain so they could stay there.

And so many other scenes: Peter refusing to allow Jesus to wash his feet; Peter drawing a sword in the Garden, striking the high priest’s slave, and cutting off his right ear; Peter proclaiming that he would never desert Jesus, and that he would willfully lay down his life for him; and then, soon after, Peter denying even knowing Jesus, three times, just as Jesus predicted he would; and Peter weeping bitterly.

And now in this morning’s story, we have Peter leaping into this post-resurrection scene naked and unashamed. This man, the most vulnerable, uncovered, exposed disciple Jesus had.

The Gospels give us a picture of a man who was earnest, eager to please, difficult to corral, a slow learner, a complex character... someone a lot like you and me.

Peter’s story should be an encouragement to the rest of us who struggle to feel worthy of being called a follower of Jesus let alone a leader in the church.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu said this:

“We may be surprised at the people we find in heaven.  
God has a soft spot for sinners.  
[God’s] standards are quite low.”

God’s standards ARE quite low. And that should be good news to us all!

The perception is that the church is made up of people

who think of themselves as morally superior —and smugly self-righteousness.

I've heard people joke that they'd better not even darken the door of a church or it might fall down.

The cultural sentiment seems to be that the church is a place we live in denial. That Christians haven't battled with their own demons. That church folks never face doubts. That Christians don't know what it is to mess up—I mean, really make a mess of their lives. Or, that Christians would never be sympathetic toward those who have—who have made bad choices, or have dysfunctional families, or who struggle with mental illness or addictions, or who like Peter have betrayed someone they love.

It's safe to bet that there are more people who stay outside the church,  
NOT because they don't believe in God,  
but because they don't trust that God believes in them.

The world should not have to strain to hear the Easter truth  
that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus,  
God took away any barrier to Love. Any attempt at being "good enough" to earn  
that Love is rendered meaningless by and through the love of God in Christ.

I've always been a fan of thrift stores. I like wearing clothes others have given away;  
I get to give them new life. I saw in a thrift store window a sign that said: "Gently  
Used and Repurposed" items.

The kingdom of God is the original Goodwill! Full of more or less gently used  
souls just like you and me. Ones given Repurposed lives. Diverse. Distinct. But deep  
down, very much the same.

We each come to God in need of grace trusting that we will be met by a God of  
hospitality--one who cooks and says, Come have breakfast.

Do you love me, Do you love me, Do you love me? Jesus asked Peter three times.

Not--have you lived a perfect life—  
or can you recite the Apostles' Creed without crossing your fingers behind your  
back?

But will you offer up who you are—all your baggage-- and follow me?  
Is there quiet enough to hear the still small voice calling you?

Are you free enough to receive the good news of forgiveness?

Like our new members joining today, You don't have to have your Christology or  
Ecclesiology or ontology worked out. You just have to be open hearted, willing to

live with the exciting risk that like Peter you might be led to places you've never imagined.

Jesus had plans for Peter's future that weren't based on Peter's level of competence or his unwavering faith. Peter's exterior garment was "frayed around the edges," and that's what Jesus loved about Peter. That's what God loves about us.

What we wear on the outside is not who we are on the inside. Our True Self is that we were made in the image of God.

Jesus extended to Peter an invitation to be free from his guilt and shame. Jesus repurposed Peter for the critical work of midwifing the church's future.

As Ian said last week, we are not each other's Messiahs. We will fall short of our own and others' expectations of us. But that's ok. We start again. And, just like God does, we extend kindness to ourselves, and kindness to others.

If there's one profound facet I pray people could embrace about Christianity it's this:

The resurrection truth is that God is never done with us. There are little deaths and little resurrections throughout our lives—heck, sometimes throughout even just one day. When we've endured our own dark nights, new mornings are offered to us. God is never finished with us because within each of us is the unique manifestation of who God intends us to be.

Can we keep OPEN our hands and hearts to receive the gentle hospitality of God -- to eat the bacon and eggs of grace,  
the holy biscuit of hope,  
smothered with the honey of love?  
Aren't you ready for breakfast?

John 21:1-19

1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. 2 Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. 4 Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." 6 He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. **9 When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.** 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. 15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 18 Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." 19 (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me." 582